



# NAVY HISTORY MATTERS

May 26, 2020



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Welcome to Navy History Matters—our weekly compilation of articles, commentaries, and blogs related to history and heritage. Every week we'll gather the top-interest items from a variety of media and social media sources and then link you to related content at NHHHC's website ([history.navy.mil](http://history.navy.mil)), your authoritative source for Navy history.

## ★ Senate Confirms Navy Secretary Kenneth Braithwaite

On May 21, the U.S. Senate confirmed Kenneth "K.J." Braithwaite as the new [Secretary of the Navy](#). Braithwaite, a Michigan native and 1984 U.S. Naval Academy graduate, was formally the ambassador to Norway and an executive for oil and health care companies. During his naval career as an antisubmarine pilot, he tracked Soviet submarines in the western Pacific and Indian Oceans while assigned to a Hawaii-based patrol squadron. From that assignment, he served in various communications and legislative affairs roles before leaving active duty in 1993 and the Naval Reserves in 2011. For more, [read the article](#) at *Defense News*.



**Photo Link:** <https://www.defensenews.com/congress/2020/05/21/senate-confirms-navy-secretary-kenneth-braithwaite/>

## ★ USS Constitution to Host Facebook Live July 4 Celebration

On July 4, the crew of [USS Constitution](#) is scheduled to host a series of presentations on [Facebook Live](#) in an effort to safely celebrate Independence Day during the COVID-19 pandemic. The events will run approximately three hours and will include a 21-gun salute, tours of "Old Ironsides," and a trivia contest where the winner will receive one of the 21 saluting battery rounds fired from the ship. "July Fourth is one of our biggest events of the year, and we're pulling out all the stops for this virtual celebration," said Cmdr. John Benda, *Constitution's* 76th commanding officer. "Our virtual tours have received an incredible response and opened our ship to new guests from around the country—even around the world—so we're thrilled to be celebrating America's birthday with all of these amazing supporters." For more, [read the U.S. Navy release](#).



**Photo Link:** [https://www.navy.mil/view\\_image.asp?id=14136&t=4](https://www.navy.mil/view_image.asp?id=14136&t=4)

## ★ How the Navy's First Black Officers Helped Reshape the American Military

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the Allies victory over Germany and Japan during [World War II](#), and the commemorations focus on the extraordinary tales of heroism that took place on the battlefields in Europe and the Pacific. One of the most consequential battles, though, took place about 35 miles north of Chicago, and its outcome forever changed the U.S. Navy. In early 1944, as the United States was preparing for the [invasion of Normandy](#), 16 [African-American Sailors](#) were brought to the Great Lakes Naval Training Center where they were told they had been selected for Officer Candidate School. At the time, this was a startling revolution. At the onset of WWII, African Americans were not allowed to enlist in the Navy's general service. They were relegated to mostly service jobs such as messmen, cooks, and waiters. The officer candidates were not career military, but when the opportunity came to break the rigid color barrier, they vowed to work harder than ever before. For more, [read the article](#) in *Time*. Also see "[The Forgotten Story of How 13 Black Men Broke the Navy's Toughest Color Barrier](#)" in *Politico*.



**Photo Link:** <https://time.com/5838843/us-navy-integration-world-war-ii/>

### ★ NMAS Renamed

On May 29, 2014, Secretary of the Navy [Ray Mabus](#) issued SECNAVNOTE 5755, which officially changed the Great Lakes Naval Museum's name to the [National Museum of the American Sailor](#). The name change was formally announced on July 4, 2016, by then-Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy [Michael Stevens](#) and NHHC's Director [Sam Cox](#). The name of the museum was changed because it better reflects the museum's mission to capture the entire experience and history of the United States Navy's enlisted Sailor. As an official Department of the Navy museum under NHHC, NMAS serves as a vital part of the heritage training process for all Navy recruits and connects them to the Navy's long tradition of honor, courage, and commitment. For more, read [Our People, Our History—Introducing the National Museum of the American Sailor](#) by Director Cox at [The Sextant](#).



**Photo Link:** <https://usnhistory.navylive.dodlive.mil/files/2016/07/2.jpg>

### ★ Paul Hamilton Commissioned

On May 27, 1995, 25 years ago, [USS Paul Hamilton](#), named for the third [Secretary of the Navy](#), was commissioned at Charleston, SC. The ship is the third to bear the name of [Paul Hamilton](#). The [first Paul Hamilton](#), a destroyer, served from 1920–1930. [The second](#), also a destroyer, served from 1943–1968. In 2002, *Paul Hamilton* deployed to join the *Abraham Lincoln* Battle Group to conduct missions in support of [Operation Enduring Freedom](#) and, in 2003, deployed in support of [Operation Iraqi Freedom](#) where she joined 29 other U.S. and British ships and submarines that fired BGM-109 [Tomahawk land-attack missiles](#) (TLAMs) against Iraqi military targets. In 2008, *Paul Hamilton* was [one of the winners](#) of the Battle Effectiveness (Battle E) award. Happy birthday, *Paul Hamilton*.



**Photo Link:** <https://www.navy.mil/management/photodb/photos/030426-N-3228G-005.jpg>

### ★ Woman Finds Navy Dog Tag Lost During WWII

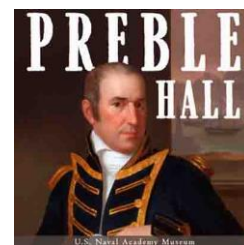
Kristin Brown's brush with history began last October while she was searching for ocean-weathered bits of frosted glass on the Kodiak, Alaska, strand. "I was looking for sea glass for some craft projects and stumbled across this dog tag that was practically buried in the sand," she said in an email to *Military Times*. The dog tag belonged to Willard Leslie Richerson, who served onboard YP-73 during [World War II](#). Brown decided she was going to try to contact the family of Richerson to return the lost artifact. Brown turned to Google and ultimately found at the website "Find a Grave" his date of birth and death. It also contained the name of his widow, but Brown couldn't find any information on her. She turned to a friend who found relatives of Richerson on Facebook. One person she found was his granddaughter. "I was shocked and couldn't believe it," said Dawn Johnson. "I contacted my dad and asked if Papa had been in Kodiak and he said yes." To learn what happened next, [read the article](#).



**Photo Link:** <https://www.navytimes.com/news/your-military/2020/05/19/woman-hunting-for-sea-glass-in-alaska-finds-wwii-navy-dog-tag-sailors-relatives-thrilled-to-get-it-back/>

### ★ Teaching Leadership at the U.S. Naval Academy

In a recent [naval history podcast](#) from Preble Hall, Cmdr. Mike Norton, PhD, of the U.S. Naval Academy's Leadership Department, discusses how midshipmen are taught as future naval officers. The [Preble Hall podcast](#), conducted by personnel at USNA in Annapolis, MD, interviews historians, practitioners, military personnel, and other experts on a variety of naval history topics from ancient history to more current events.



**Photo Link:** <https://www.usna.edu/Museum/PrebleHall/>

### ★ The Real History that Inspired WWII Film *Greyhound*

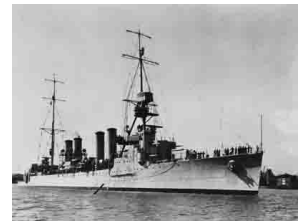
Set in 1942, the new [World War II](#) film *Greyhound*, starring Tom Hanks, tells the story of a Navy captain tasked with commanding a convoy of 37 Allied ships across the treacherous North Atlantic. The movie is based off C. S. Forester's 1955 novel *The Good Shepherd*. In the winter of 1942, Cmdr. George Krause had been on the bridge of his destroyer for nearly 24 hours locked in a game of cat and mouse with a pack of German U-boats—how many enemy submarines is not clear. The weather was freezing, and ice covered the surface and rails of his ship. Every decision Krause made was heart-wrenching over the course of the engagement. To add to the weight of his responsibility, it was the commander's first transatlantic convoy. For more, [read the article](#) at *History Extra*. For more on the [Battle of the Atlantic](#), go to NHHC's website.



**Photo Link:** <https://www.historyextra.com/period/second-world-war/greyhound-film-ww2-tom-hanks-battle-atlantic-the-good-shepherd-novel-c-s-forester/>

### ★ Webpage of the Week

This week's Webpage of the Week is a new entry on NHHC's [DANFS](#) index. Named in honor of the capital city of New Jersey, [USS Trenton](#) was commissioned on April 19, 1924. A little over a month later, the ship set out on a 25,000-mile shakedown cruise through Trinidad in the British West Indies, Cape Town, and Durban, South Africa. The ship also made stops at Zanzibar in British East Africa, and Aden (Yemen). On Oct. 24, 1924, while off the Virginia Capes, powder bags in the ship's forward turret exploded, killing or injuring every man of the gun crew. During the ensuing fire, Ensign [Henry C. Drexler](#) and BM1c [George R. Cholister](#) attempted to dump powder charges into the immersion tank before they detonated, but the charges burst, killing Drexler, and fire and fumes overcame Cholister before he could reach his objective. He died the following day. Both men received the [Medal of Honor](#) posthumously. For more, read the history authored by NHHC historian Mark L. Evans.



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/NH-43000/NH-43751.html>

### ★ Today in Naval History

On May 26, 1958, Hospital Corpsman Third Class [William R. Charette](#), who received the [Medal of Honor](#) during the [Korean War](#) for heroism, selected one of the [World War II](#) unknown servicemembers during a ceremony onboard USS *Canberra* off the Virginia Capes. After completion of the selection ceremony, the WWII and Korean War unknowns were transported to Virginia for burial at Arlington National Cemetery. The other WWII unknown was buried at sea. Charette was credited with saving many lives during an engagement with enemy forces on March 27, 1953.



For more dates in naval history, including your selected span of dates, see [Year at a Glance](#) at [NHHC's website](#). Be sure to check this page regularly, as content is updated frequently.

**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/NH-54000/NH-54118.html>